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In Search of the Historical Henry VI, 1589-1594

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Introduction

Let softer strains ill-fated Henry mourn,
And palms eternal flourish round his urn.
Here o'er the martyr-king the marble weeps,
And, fast beside him, once-fear'd Edward sleeps,
Whom not th' extended Albion could contain,
From old Bellerium to the northern main;
The grave unites; where ev'n the great find rest
And blended lie th' oppressor and th' oppressed!
-Alexander Pope, "Windsor Forest,"
(ll. 311-18)

The Shakespeare industry has produced an impressive if not overwhelming volume of material on nearly every facet of the playwright's personality, society, philosophy, and writing. It is reasonable, therefore, to ask whether or not one more study of Shakespeare from an historical point of view is necessary at all, and, if indeed there is anything left to add to Shakespeare lore. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that historians will ever exhaust the possibilities in analyzing one who is perhaps the greatest literary treasure in the English language. The next question which arises, then, is, what areas of Shakespeare study have as yet been inadequately developed? There are perhaps several such areas, and one in particular is the treatment of Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three. These plays, along with Richard III comprise the first tetralogy of the history plays, and, combined with the second tetralogy of Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, and Henry V, complete the playwright's lengthy epic of the Wars of the Roses.

The tradition in Shakespeare literature is to view the history plays as one unit, making up the playwright's version of the

so-called Tudor Myth. The Tudor Myth is the name modern historians have placed upon the official rationalization which the Tudor monarchs advanced for their own existence. To briefly summarize the myth, apologists for the Tudor regime saw Richard II as a weak, capricious and unjust monarch who denied Henry of Lancaster his rightful inheritance to the king's brother, John of Gaunt. Lancaster then usurped the throne, becoming Henry IV, and ruled the land competently. Yet an overzealous supporter of the new king murdered Richard II, and so while the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V were prosperous, England was nevertheless fated to pay for this regicide. Henry VI, then, fell prey to the dissention festering in the English court, and Richard Duke of York rose in rebellion with a rival claim to the throne. Civil war then raged intermittently from 1461 to 1485, when Henry Tudor, nephew of Henry VI, unified the houses of Lancaster and York through marriage and became Henry VII. Traditionally, then, Shakespeare has been viewed as just such an apologist, who asserted the legitimacy of the Tudor reign based upon its unifying of the great York and Lancaster factions.

Yet the vast majority of writings on the history plays concerns the second tetralogy, with an overwhelming emphasis on Richard III as well. The Henry VI literature, then, has been spotty at best, leaving large gaps in interpretation and historical significance. To be sure, these three plays have not been entirely ignored, and the discussion falls essentially into two categories. On the one hand, several critics view the Henry VI plays in their relation to the historical events which they describe. This group of writers generally focus upon Shakespeare's

use of Edward Hall's Chronicle of English history, and Raphael Holinshed's Chronicle of England, Scotland, and Ireland, as the primary sources for all of the history plays. Moreover, it is this group of critics which simply place the Henry VI plays among those allegedly establishing the Tudor Myth. Among these writers are A. R. Benham, whose article on "The Renewal of the Hundred Years War" (Philological Quarterly, vol. VI) focuses primarily on Henry's father, and Ernest Sirluck, whose article on "Shakespeare and Johnson among the Pamphleteers of the First Civil War" (Modern Philology, vol. LIII) looks at the Puritan's interpretation of Henry VI. The most comprehensive analysis of Henry VI according to this traditional view is that of Michael Manheim, in The Weak King, Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play. Again, the emphasis is primarily on the chronicles as Shakespeare's sources, and on the Tudor Myth.

On the other hand, several writers have approached the Henry VI plays from a religious perspective. Some of the writings in this vein are of minimal importance, such as the unlikely article "Shakespeare a Catholic?" (Catholic World, vol. CLXXVI) by a lesser known critic named Tucker. Yet many writers of considerable importance have approached the subject of Shakespeare and religion; unfortunately, they have shed little light on Henry VI. Robert Stevenson's "Shakespeare's Cardinals and Bishops" (Crozer Quarterly, vol. XXVII), for example, contains passing references to Cardinal Winchester of Henry VI, but maintains that the playwright's interests were essentially secular. Frederick S. Boas' "Joan of Arc" (Shakespeare Quarterly, vol. II) is a considerably more detailed look at the religious issue in Henry VI, but the

writer is primarily concerned with Elizabethan attitudes toward witchcraft. G. Wilson Knight's entire volume of criticism, Shakespeare and Religion, contains no more than one or two passing references to Henry VI, and again the writer fails to expand upon the general theme of religion in these three plays. Hence, while this second group of critics raises the question of religious influences in Henry VI, it fails to answer them adequately. It is safe to conclude, then, that Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three, have been largely neglected, except in those instances where these plays can be fitted into the larger framework of the Tudor Myth. The question therefore remains as to what interest Henry VI can hold for modern historians. The interest in Henry VI is threefold. In the first place, of the thirty-eight plays which Shakespeare wrote, the Henry VI plays comprise the first three. Part One was written in 1589-90, and Parts Two and Three in 1590-91; a revised 1 Henry VI appeared in 1594.¹ Clearly Shakespeare, as a London playwright, was interested in attracting a faithful patronage among the influential sector of this society, and Henry VI represents his first attempt to make a name for himself. It is not at all unlikely, therefore, that he intended to cater to the interests of the London elite. The Henry VI plays are, to be sure, not an accurate representation of the playwright's later genius, but they are his first efforts and so they merit attention.

Secondly, if, as the critical tradition has so far indicated, modern historians are to take Shakespeare's histories as an example of the Tudor Myth, Henry VI is interesting because of the position which that king occupies. Henry VI is the pivotal figure in the Tudor Myth, because it is he who pays the price for

Henry IV's usurpation of Richard II. Moreover, it is through the weakness of Henry VI that the Wars of the Roses erupt, yet it is also he who prophesies the reign of Henry Tudor. Therefore, it is crucial to the myth that the last Lancastrian king look superior to Richard II, also an ineffectual ruler, so that Henry's prophecy (in some sense) legitimizes the Tudor ascendance. For this reason the myth presents Henry VI as a saintly figure whose piety compensated for his deficiencies in the political sphere. Obviously, then, Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry VI and his unfortunate reign is central to the interpretation of the history plays as the Tudor Myth. The degree to which the Henry VI plays reflect that king as a sacrifice for his grandfather's usurpation - that is, the degree to which Shakespeare's Henry is a saintly martyr - is indicative of the degree to which Shakespeare based his histories on the myth.

Finally, these plays are significant to historical study in that they represent a general interest of the period. That is, Englishmen in general were interested in their past, specifically their Catholic past around the time of Henry VI and Richard III. Plays and political writings on England's civil war abound in the period from 1589 to 1594; curiously, this interest proceeded the Armada threat of 1588, and paralleled a general fear of Catholic insurrections. Two important questions arise from this interest in the York-Lancastrian feud. First, what was the attitude of English Protestant writers to their Catholic predecessors, both heroes and villains? Secondly, to what extent does their treatment of Catholic history reflect the mood of the country, the religious and political issues at hand, and their feelings toward contemporary policy in religious matters? To take Shakespeare as the

representative writer in this school of poets and political commentators is logical in that he was among the most successful in his own day, not to mention the popularity he has enjoyed since. Hence, the need for a closer look at Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three.

With the study of Henry VI thus legitimized, it remains to raise the important questions concerning these plays. To set the stage, it is necessary first to look at the moral and political climate of Elizabethan England. What were the great issues confronting parliament and society, and what threats, real or imagined, controlled the temperment of Shakespeare's day? Specifically, the question of religion is of particular importance to any study of sixteenth century England. How, then, did religious issues affect culture in this period? And again, how did religious and political divisions reveal themselves in popular writing, such as Shakespeare's plays? It is the purpose of the first chapter to focus upon these questions, and attempt to place the three parts of Henry VI into a cultural and political framework.

Yet the question still remains, was Shakespeare's writing in some sense unique to the period? To find the answer, it is necessary to survey the literary and historical record of the previous period, to focus specifically on the discussion of issues which Shakespeare would later take up. Moreover, an overview of the playwright's sources will certainly shed some light upon the Henry VI plays as they relate to the period from 1589 to 1594. Do the issues important to earlier writers receive the same or similar treatment in Shakespeare's sources? And do the plays reflect a departure from the sources, or are they in line with earlier

treatments of Henry VI? These questions occupy prominent positions in chapters two and three, the literary and historical record in chapter two, and the play in relation to the literary and historical record in chapter three.

Finally, what remains is to uncover any of Shakespeare's own innovations. In particular, it is necessary to look at departures from the sources and earlier writings, and ask if it is possible to discern within these differences resonances or reflections of the religious and political issues discussed in chapter one. Is it possible to determine Shakespeare's viewpoint on these issues? Do these plays reflect a concern for the divisions within the playwright's England? What was the popular understanding of religious and political problems? Chapter four attempts to answer these questions. Finally, in the conclusion, one last question remains: Has the modern interpretation of the Henry VI plays as part of the Tudor Myth provided the proper historical insight into Shakespeare's England, and how does this new interpretation affect that of the Tudor Myth for the two tetralogies of history plays? A study of this length cannot possibly hope to re-interpret all eight plays, but focusing upon Henry VI may nevertheless shed new light on Shakespeare's historical writing.

Chapter One:
Politics and Religion in Shakespeare's Day

As Shakespeare completed the play which was to become the first part of Henry VI in 1589, the Lord Chancellor Sir Christopher Hatton delivered a stirring and xenophobic speech to the parliament which convened on February 4. The subject of his speech was the threat of Catholic disobedience to Queen Elizabeth, a threat which he saw as part of a larger continental conspiracy against Protestantism. Focusing upon England's two great enemies, Hatton characterized the pope as a "wolfish bloodsucker" and the king of Spain as an "insatiable tyrant."² If these labels seemed exaggerations to the lords assembled in parliament, Hatton supported his claim by pointing to recent uprisings which Catholics fomented, including the prominent barons Somerville, Paury, Savage and Babington. It was the Roman church, the Lord Chancellor said, under the leadership of Pope Sextus V, who encouraged these traitors. The very act of sending Catholic priests into English communities, Hatton said, was committed "under the pretense of planting Popery" in a Protestant stronghold.³

Clearly, at this point in time, the nobles in power were not willing to forget the threat of Spain, having just recently faced the Armada crisis of the previous year. Yet beneath the xenophobic surface of such speeches as Hatton's lay a basic ideology, a profound belief which typified the England of Shakespeare's day. In a sense, this nation was the least tolerant of the reformed states in Europe, for both religious and political reasons. At the very heart of Hatton's antipathy toward Catholics laid the doctrine known as that of the "visible church": the

church of England was carrying forward a tradition consistent "with the most ancient general councils, with the practice of the primitive church, and with the judgements of all the old and learned fathers."⁴ Since, the doctrine ran, there can only be one true church, it was the Catholics, and not the Anglicans, who strayed from the paths laid by the ancient religious patriarchs. Again, in the so-called "Chain of Being" doctrine, English theology stressed the need for order, unity and decorum. With God at the head of the chain, this political order became at the same time a religious order; with every man in his proper role, church and state functioned smoothly. Dissent within the church, therefore, threatened the state as well as offending God.⁵ Obviously, then, Englishmen had both a political and moral obligation to uphold the Anglican Church against all foreign attacks.

At the same time, as Hatton's speech makes clear, ideology may frequently provide the politically shrewd with a weapon for implementing policy. Indeed, Queen Elizabeth intended to use Hatton's speech as a rationalization for advancing her own power in religious matters. Although she tended to be ambiguous on religious questions, she insisted upon absolute control over the church hierarchy. Apparently she hoped that Hatton's speech would impress upon the parliament the need to grant her sole executive power in church matters, to the furtherance of the Protestant cause.⁶ The House of Commons, however, was not so easily manipulated, and it produced its own program for religious harmony. According to the legislation proposed by Humphrey Davenport, reform of canon law abuses and increased leniency on other Protestant sects provided a twofold answer to religious unrest.

In the ensuing power struggle, the queen succeeded in defeating Davenport's reform bill, and so the question was temporarily settled in favor of the monarch.⁷ While this fight proved inconclusive in the long run, it is nevertheless enlightening in retrospect. What was, on the surface, a matter of theology and national security was, in fact, developing into a struggle between Commons and the crown. Hence, because control of the church meant virtual control of the English people, the interests of Commons and the queen frequently collided.

When the queen killed Davenport's proposition, her purpose was to take up such matters of religion with the powerful bishops of the Anglican Church, and pass judgement according to their recommendations.⁸ A similar conflict emerged in the parliament of 1593, at which Commons again moved to extend its control over church policy. Here the promoter of reform legislation was James Morice, an attorney of the Court of Wards, and his bill took Davenport's proposal far beyond the simple correction of abuses. The weight of Morice's attack fell upon the powerful Court of High Commission, which he accused of corruption. In addition, he criticized the policy of requiring oaths of allegiance to the Church of England, and the prosecutions which followed upon their abrogation.⁹ Again, the religious and political spheres collided in a heated debate upon what became an important question of power relationships within the English government. The question centered upon the relationship ^{between} secular and ecclesiastical courts. Morice, and supporters such as Sir Francis Knollys, argued that the clergy should not have been allowed to enter into secular law through "unlawful imprisonment and restraint of liberty."¹⁰ This attack

upon the very authority of the church implies a growing radicalism within factions of Commons. On the side of this debate, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the queen's diligent servant, asserted that Morice and his radical followers were undermining the social structure of England. To destroy the power of the Church, he said, was to destroy the power of the monarchy. Furthermore, he reminded Commons that the queen had already shown open disapproval at parliament's meddling in religious affairs.¹¹ This obvious reference to the Davenport proposal of 1589 set the stage for Elizabeth's power play. In a well-calculated speech before both houses of parliament, she laid the religious question to rest. Her message was clear: she had called this parliament not to legislate but to discuss the defense of the realm. Any legislation, she asserted, was to be confined specifically to defense, and while she expressed appreciation for parliament's concern for the church, she warned them against any further action on ecclesiastical matters. Clearly, church reform was to be her concern exclusively, despite the radical faction within Commons. As in 1589, parliament was unwilling to oppose the queen, and the Morice bill failed. Moreover, its sponsor spent eight weeks in prison for defying the queen's proscription on reform bills.¹² The question of church control, then, became at least temporarily resolved during the period from 1589 to 1593.

Yet, despite the upheavals over church reform, the queen and parliament worked well together on the specific issue of the Catholic threat. Here both the monarch and the legislature agreed that the Catholic Church posed a serious security problem. To limit the influence of Catholics within English society, a bill

entered parliament to impose heavy fines upon recusants and exclude them from many professions. The original text of the bill was harshly worded, but in committee its tone became more tolerant - indeed, too tolerant for the queen. As with the previous measures on religious issues, parliament conceded to Elizabeth's pressure and abandoned the bill.¹³ The government then drew up its own bill, condemning seditious Catholics and dissenting sectaries as traitors. Burghley introduced this bill in parliament for the queen, and while Commons made it less harsh, the bill passed without difficulty. In addition, a second bill further limiting the mobility of Catholics in England originated in the House of Lords, and this bill also passed easily.¹⁴ The general policy of both the queen and parliament, then, was to severely limit economic opportunities for Catholics and regard them as potential insurgents against the state.

Yet the Catholic question was not the only political and religious issue of Shakespeare's day. Radical Protestant sects, particularly the Puritan fundamentalists, proved to be equally threatening to the state. While the government's policies of requiring loyalty oaths and imposing harsh restrictions upon recusants was primarily aimed at Catholics, these measures affected the dissenting Protestant sects as well. Indeed, inherent within the bills sponsored by Davenport and Morice was an attempt to lessen the harsh treatment which Puritans had received. Certainly any efforts to control the Anglican clergy and the clerical courts meant relief for the more extreme Protestants. Yet the queen's speech to parliament in 1593 made her policy clear: to her all dissenters, Protestant and Catholic alike, posed a threat to

national security.¹⁵ Again, the queen perceived these religious matters as issues of power within and among the institutions of government. Both the doctrine of the visible church and the Chain of Being philosophy implied indirectly that control of the church meant control of its members, and so the need for religious unity was central to her ascendancy.¹⁶ The Puritan question, then, was not one of a dogmatic pursuit of the Reformation, but one of power relationships within the government. Once again, the queen emerged dominant.

The fact that Burghley introduced the bill against Catholic recusants in the parliament of 1593 is not surprising, for he was perhaps Elizabeth's most trusted advisor on matters of religious policy. While he was in the main rather more sympathetic towards the Puritans than the Catholics, he nevertheless realized that the dissenting Protestants on the left were voicing increased attacks upon the queen. The problem he faced, then, was one of divided loyalties, for he was at once a faithful servant and a devout believer in the Protestant cause. Accordingly, he chose a middle route, allowing Protestant sectaries to come under the scope of the 1593 government bill, but he opposed a harsher measure sponsored by Whitgift in the same parliament. His aim, clearly, was to control radical Protestants without engendering a strong reaction against the monarchy.¹⁷ Moreover, Burghley was rather more understanding of the intricacies of the religion question than the queen. To him, the ideal church encompassed a broader basis, moderate enough to accomodate the less extreme Catholics and Puritans. He saw great advantages in being able to wean away the moderate sections of these groups from their radical element.¹⁸ Because

Elizabeth was primarily concerned with maintaining political control of the church, Burghley largely implemented the policy on recusants against Catholics and Protestants alike; it was only later in life, when he wrote the propagandistic Meditations on the State of England in 1595, that he expressed his preference for Puritans over Catholics.¹⁹

This, then, was the atmosphere in which Shakespeare wrote and performed Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three: England divided into essentially three groups according to religious beliefs, and the monarchy struggling with parliament for control of religious matters. Between the parliaments of 1589 and 1593, the playwright wrote his first three plays, revising the first in 1594. During this period of time, when religious and political issues were so complex and intrinsically linked, the Stationers Company in London recorded several pieces on these issues, most following the formula of William Wrighte's tract of January, 1591: A rare and due commendacon of the singular vertues and government of the quenes most excellent maiestie with the happie and blessed estate of Englande and howe God hathe blessed her highnes from tyme to tyme.²⁰ That is to say, most of these pieces praised the queen, exalted her moral qualities, and asserted the greatness of the Anglican Church under her leadership. Of greater importance to the study of Henry VI, the year 1594 saw three works produced on this same subject: Thomas Myllington's The firste parte of the Contention of the twoo famous houses of YORK and LANCASTER, Thomas Crede's The Tragedie of RICHARD the THIRD, and Samuel Danyell's The discention betwixt the houses of YORKE and LANCASTER.²¹ Curiously, the Myllington piece bears nearly the same title as

Shakespeare's first version of Henry VI, The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, which first appeared in 1594.²²

Whether or not Shakespeare's plays influenced the writings of 1594 is unclear; what is certain, however, is that Shakespeare's first history plays were known in London and its environs. Indeed, among the more ironic utterances in history was Robert Greene's famous comment on the Henry VI plays, ". . . there is an upstart crow, beautified with our (the dramatic poets') feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapp'd in a player's hide supposes that he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you. . . ." ²³ Yet Greene's premature criticism of Shakespeare is enlightening, because the Henry VI plays were in fact part of a new development, just over a decade old, in English drama, but one which began to typify the Elizabethan stage. Indeed, it may well be that Shakespeare largely imitated the popular plays of his day, without relying on much specialized knowledge of history. During the late 1580's and early 1590's, English history was in fact a favorite subject for the London stage, with titles including Edward I and Edward III, The Troublesome Reign of King John, The Famous Victories of Henry V, and The True Tragedy of Richard III.²⁴ Hence, it seems most likely that Shakespeare's Henry VI plays and the York-Lancaster tracts of 1594 were part of a general trend to look at British history.

While this renewed interest in late medieval history seems clear enough, the question which next arises is that of the connection between this new interest and the literary tradition as it recorded the events of Henry VI. Thus far the stage for

Shakespeare has been set: of all the issues troubling English politics, religion was among the most severe. To Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth, these religious questions became a matter of exercising power over the common folk, and so the queen asserted that she had ultimate authority in these matters. Meanwhile, Shakespeare's first effort to write plays focused upon Catholic England immediately proceeding the Wars of the Roses. If in fact the writers of 1589-93 were aware of political issues, and, among those writers, if Shakespeare sought to advance himself within the London theatre (and there is evidence that he was eventually patronized by Lord Burghley²⁵) then the next important consideration is what, if any, alternations were made in the treatment of the York-Lancaster dispute.

Chapter Two: The Historical and Literary Record of Henry VI

The first question that arises in discussing Henry VI in terms of English literature and historical writing is rather simple: did the writings of earlier poets, such as Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate, as well as the later chroniclers, Raphael Holinshed and Edward Hall, written before and after the reign of Henry VI, depart significantly from the treatment of kingship in the late middle ages. To find an answer to this question, however, proves to be difficult. Nevertheless, the early fifteenth century writings of Hoccleve, for example, provide an interesting comparison to the later writers, including Shakespeare. The issues which interested Hoccleve and later writers who preceeded the playwright are for the most part the same, issues such as the importance of the king's coronation oath, justice and the law, mercy, prudence, the preservation of peace, and so on. Hence, when Hoccleve began to write his Regiment of Princes in 1411 for the Prince of Wales, soon to be Henry V, he focused his attention upon the issues which would later occur to Lydgate, and to the chroniclers (ostensibly Shakespeare's primary source). The important question for historical analysis, then, is that of the treatment of similar issues at different points in time.

Beginning with Hoccleve, who wrote during the reign of the first Lancastrian king, The Regiment of Princes is a particularly interesting work. It is a lengthy, didactic poem the purpose of which was to instruct the young heir and father of Henry VIⁱⁿ the proper role of a king in England. The general heading under which

the poem's various sections fall is "Advice to Henry, Prince of Wales," and the sections themselves have titles of their own: "The Dignity of a King," "On Justice," "On Pity," and so on. Opening the poem with these lines:

ffirst and foreward, the dignitee of a kyng
Impressid be in the botme of your mynde,
Considering how chargeable a thyng
That office is; for so ye schul it fynde²⁶

Hoccleve sets the tone for the entire work. He advises the young prince on the function of kingship within English society, and the elevated speech and emphasis upon dignity continues throughout the poem. Turning his attention to justice, he urges the prince to obey God and treat all men fairly, admonishing him to show respect to "The grete eke to the smale" (l. 2471). In section six, "On Mercy," Hoccleve continues to stress the importance of fairness, noting the traditional Christian view that a forgiver will himself be forgiven. Here, as elsewhere throughout the poem, he admonishes the prince to remember the merciful Henry IV and John of Gaunt: "folwe hem two . . . in goddis name!" the poet urges (l. 3353).

The final two sections of The Regiment of Princes, "On Taking Advice" and "On Peace," are of particular interest to the study of Henry VI and his downfall, because these issues became insurmountable difficulties for this monarch. Section fourteen, on advice, exhorts Henry V to take no actions without consulting trusted ministers at court. Of every king Hoccleve asserts, ". . . he may/Erre and mistake hym . . ./Where-as good counsail may exclude a wrong" (ll. 4863-65). Moreover, the poet adds, a good king listens to his counsellors without expressing his own opinion; rather, he weighs the information he receives to formulate his own opinion. Yet he warns the prince not to trust the

greedy or powerhungry lords, and to be constantly on guard against traitors at court. Hoccleve also shows concern for kings who rely upon young or inexperienced counsellors, saying that the old should rule, "And youthe it sue . . ." (l. 4963). Clearly it is important to the poet that a king show discretion in choosing his advisors, and that he is not manipulated by the evil or the unwise.

In section fifteen, Hoccleve urges the prince to follow the pattern of what the poet considers to be a truly great king:

To crist ordeyneth he a mancioun,
Which in his herte's habitacioun
Embraceth pees. Wher pees is, crist is there.
(ll. 5023-25)

Throughout this closing section, the poet repeatedly urges Henry to be mild, peaceful and pacifistic. To pursue the path of civil peace, Hoccleve suggests three methods: "Conformyng in god; in our self humblesse; /And with our neigheboures tranquillite" (ll. 5035-36). Mentioning Herod and Judas, the poet then warns against a false civil peace, alleging that many Englishmen are insincere in their professed desire for stability within the realm. Continuing along the religious parallel, Hoccleve cites the fall of Adam, who is to the poet the first prince. Adam, he says, made an "inordinant" peace with Eve, (l. 5090), and thus succumbed to his ruin. The poet then goes into greater detail on the evils of civil war, fearing that factions will split England as they once split the Roman Empire. Ironically, Hoccleve's next reference is to England's relations to France, of which he says the two Christian states ought to be "oon in herte" (l. 5325) - yet Henry V became England's great hero in the field against the French. Finally, Hoccleve concludes that the only proper war is that of

Christian princes against the unbelievers, to bring them into the Christian faith.

Like Hoccleve, John Lydgate wrote his major work, The Fall of Princes, for a young Lancastrian prince. Henry VI was ten years old in 1431, and had reigned nearly as long, when Lydgate began this work for Humphrey Duke of Gloucester.²⁷ The duke apparently commissioned Lydgate to produce this poem, which is, like Hoccleve's work, didactic in its intent. As he states in his prologue, this poet is primarily interested in the mutability of princely power and the transience of the temporal world. Here already there is a sharp change in tone: Lydgate warns his monarch not to be overly confident of his position, but to realize that he is at the mercy of fate.²⁸ As with Hoccleve's work, the place of God in the life of a king is of paramount importance, and Lydgate stresses the necessity of obedience to Him as the poet perceives it. The Fall of Princes, moreover, contains the self conscious commentary on the somber and pessimistic tone of its verse, and the poet asks, ". . . who shall be my muse, /Or onto whom shal I for helpe calle?" (ll. 239-40)²⁹ The prologue then briefly cites similar works throughout history, such as the writings of Seneca and Tully, and then continues with praise for Gloucester, who studied such writing. Finally, the poet notes Gloucester's inspiration and patronage.

Book I, then, begins with a discussion of Adam, whom Lydgate, like Hoccleve, considered to be the first prince. The fall of Adam and Eve, according to this later poet, can be attributed to the fact that they were "blyndid . . . /Thoruh veynglorie and fals ambicioun!" (ll. 673-74) The poet traces the typical Christian

story of transitory fortune, telling of Cain's trechery, the fading of Adam's youth, and the increased toil of mankind. Concluding this first section of Book I, he warns the king that pride will lead to disobedience among his people. Lydgate then traces through various classical myths, including the stories of Isis, Philomela, Jason, Minos and Daedalus, and frequently returns to Biblical stories. Throughout these tales, he repeatedly reveals the failures of worldly princes, concluding Book I with an admonition against rash action and vengeance. Book II echoes Hoccleve's concern for choosing proper ministers to aid the king, emphasising at length the benefits of an ascetic life and the experiences it produces. Continuing with his history, Lydgate then examines the end of the regal period in Rome, and the founding of Carthage. Throughout this history, the poet returns to the didactic voice with digressions on industry and idleness, poverty and obedience to God. Closing Book II, he exhorts Henry VI to remember Rome's decline as a warning against decadence:

O noble Pryncis, off hih discrecioun,
Seeth in this world ther is non abidyng . . .
(ll. 4586-87)

Books III through IX follow suit, with this same moralizing tone and constant reminders of failure. Returning to the Romans in Book III, he then discusses the rise and fall of Darius. Books IV, V and VI bring his history from Alexander the Great through Pyrrhus' career to Herod's ordering the children of his kingdom slain. Books VII, VIII and IX begin with Caligula, continue through Constantine's reign and that of King Arthur, and conclude finally with the French King John, whom the English Prince Edward defeated in battle. Again, throughout these books, Lydgate

comments on the appropriate behavior of kings:

. . . yif the throne of kyngli excellence
Be supportid with iustise and clemence
In hym that shal as legal iudge stonde
Tween riche & poore, with sceptre & swerd in honde
(ll. 2356-59) -

then the realm will remain secure and prosperous. Again, like Hoccleve, the solemn, rational and didactic tone comes through. Yet the constant reminders of mortality and failure significantly alter the effect of Lydgate's writing. It seems that, by 1431, this political writer showed signs of apprehension towards the future, a pessimism not found in The Regiment of Princes. "Blak be thi wede of compleynt and moorning/Callid Fall of Princis from ther felicite" begins the final stanza of Book IX (ll. 3621-22), and it concludes: "Who wil encrece bi vertu must ascende" (l. 3628).

Turning to those who wrote after the death of Henry VI, John Blacman began his hagiographical book, A Compilation of the Meekness and Good Life of King Henry VI, under the auspices of the first Tudor monarch, Henry VII. Blacman's book did not actually appear until 1510, one year after the latter king's death. The work is not so much a biography or history of Henry VI, as it is a series of commentaries on his nature and personality. The book was ostensibly written by Blacman as a religious counsellor to the king, but modern historians have hypothesized that Henry VII actually commissioned the work with expressed intention of making the late king (Henry VII's uncle, incidentally) a candidate for sainthood.³⁰ The author appropriately opens his work with "A devout Prayer" of Henry VI in which the king emplores God: "be it so done with me as pleaseth Thee and as seemeth good in the

eyes of thy divine Majesty."³¹ The tone of this passage continues throughout the whole work, which depicts Henry as a patient man buffeted and abused by the ambitious lords around him. In addition, the author makes no uncertain connection between this king and "the saints of God," "in the register of whom," he writes, "I take that most excellent king to be rightly included" (p. 25). From this prologue, Blacman goes on to describe the king's piety, generosity, humility, patience - in short, all the virtues becoming of a martyr and a saint. Furthermore, to enhance this view of Henry, Blacman reports "the heavenly mysteries which were shown to this king," including the appearance of Christ while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London (pp. 41-42). Apparently, this view of the saint-king was already well-established, for the 1919 edition of Blacman's tract includes a popular prayer of 1508:

O blessyd kyng so gracios and gud
Thou pray to sett this rewe in rest
Unto our Saveyour that dyed on roud
And to his modyr that madyn blessyd
To plesor of the Deyte
Thys I besech at my request
Now swete King Henre praye for me. (p. 51)

Moreover, Henry's original burial place at Chertsey had become by this time a popular place for pilgrimages.³²

What is interesting to note here in the hagiography of the early Tudor period is the echoing of Hoccleve and Lydgate. Indeed, the prayer that prefaces Blacman's Compilation echoes the very fatalism of The Fall of Princes and captures its moral tone. The virtues which Blacman ascribes to Henry are those which, according to Hoccleve and Lydgate, are the badges of ideal kingship: piety, patience, the ascetic life, generosity, mercy. What is missing in Blacman's portrait that appears in The Regiment of Princes is

the two elements discussed in the final section: the wise choice of counsellors and the maintainance of the peace. While Lydgate discusses only the issue of advisors directly, he nevertheless implies the evils of faction and civil war throughout his discussion of princes who fail. In the Compilation, Blacman's Henry appears to be unable to control his advisors or any of the powerful lords at court. The essential difference between this Henry VI and the ideal kings of Hoccleve and Lydgate is that he is the victim of forces beyond his control - that is, he fell prey to the very evils against which the earlier writers warned. Therefore he cannot be, as portrayed in the Compilation, a perfect king: the alternative, then, is to present Henry VI as a martyr and a saint.

Turning to a later work, and one which may be considered more historical, Edward Hall's Chronicle, originally titled The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke, first appeared in 1548. While Hall and Raphael Holinshed, writing later, both attempted to present a fairly objective view of Henry's reign, it seems clear that both writers to some extent accepted the Blacman tradition. However, Hall's main emphasis in the first half of "The Troubleous Season of Kyng Henry the Sixt" is the war in France. Here, the author shows little concern for the internal divisions which dominated the king's minority. Of the strife between the dukes of Bedford and Gloucester over the regency of the realm, Hall reports only the final solution, with Bedford made Regent of France and Gloucester made Protector of the Realm, as though this arrangement were initially agreed upon.³³ For the first twenty years of the king's reign, comprising eighty-eight of the 143 pages in Hall's history, the majority of the

action takes place upon the battle fields in France. Here the historian's national bias emerges in the extreme. When, for example, the English decline battle it is because they are wisely "considering the multitude of the enemies and the farre absences of their friendes," where as when the French attempt to parley it is because they are "fearyng to fight in an open battaill" (p. 140). Clearly the war in France is of paramount importance to Hall, who uses the conflict to continually contrast French treachery to English valor.³⁴

Nevertheless, what is important to notice in this treatment of the French wars is that Hall never criticizes Henry for the loss of French territory. When the historian discusses the marriage truce negotiated between the two nations, he asserts that the Duke of Suffolk is to blame for England's losses. After the negotiators arrived at an initial truce, according to Hall, Suffolk went beyond the limits of his power as a representative of Henry, arranging the marriage to Margaret of Anjou because he "imagined in his phantasie, that the next waie to come to a perfite peace, was to moue some marriage, betwene the Frenche Kyngs Kyneswoman, and Kyng Henry . . ." (p. 203). Hall continues, criticizing the duke's judgement and indicating that he may have accepted a bribe. Of the king, the historian merely implies that he believed this marriage would end the war with France while preserving the traditional English holdings of Normandy and Gascony. Describing the dissent at court created by this rather unprofitable marriage - which, according to Hall, ultimately led to Henry's deposition - he asserts that "God with this matrimony was not content" (pp. 204-05). Even after the marriage, when Henry comes into his majority, the

historian withholds criticism of the king when Normandy and Gascony succumb to the French. The French, as Hall tells the story, simply took advantage of the divisions within the English court, largely being the fault of Queen Margaret (who was, of course, French herself) (p. 213). This connection to France, then, created by the ambitious Duke of Suffolk is, according to this chronicle, the divisive force which causes the territorial loss.

When Hall turns his attention to the intermittent struggles between the Duke of Gloucester and Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, the historian reveals his preference for the worldly statesman over the powerful churchman. The first open contest between the lords came in 1426, according to Hall, when Gloucester leveled various charges against Winchester, including denying the duke access to the Tower, attempting to depose him and dominate the king, and conspiring to kill the duke. Winchester, in turn, charged the duke with disturbing the king's peace, attempting to control the king's person, and libelling the bishop (pp. 130-33). As the chronicler tells it, the conflict was resolved by making the two lords swear an oath of loyalty to the king and drop their respective charges. An interesting contrast later emerges in this chronicle, in which Winchester, now a cardinal, and Gloucester are both sent to the continent with armies. Winchester follows the pope's orders, leading troops into Bohemia to quell the insurrection begun by religious dissentors. The chronicler, openly sarcastic of this Catholic priest turned warrior at the pope's request, comments on the bishop's early return home, "more glad of his retraite, then of his aduaūsyng forward" (p. 153). Gloucester, by contrast, quickly subdues the anti-English forces

in Flanders, and returns home victorious (p. 184). To Hall, then, the bishop is wavering and ineffectual, while the duke is bold and successful.

In the next open conflict between Gloucester and Winchester, which occurred in 1442, Hall again lists the charges raised. The main point of Gloucester's accusations, according to the chronicler, was that the bishop blatantly violated Henry V's expressed wish that he not become a cardinal. Moreover, Hall relates that Gloucester went so far as to accuse the cardinal of encouraging the Duke of Burgundy to desert the English. By emphasizing these aspects of the duke's charges, the chronicler places Winchester in league with England's two great adversaries, the pope and Catholic France. However, the writer maintains that the king's council was biased in favor of Winchester, and so Gloucester was forced to drop his charges (pp. 197-202). And while he does not openly side with Gloucester, he nevertheless accuses Winchester of exercising undue influence over the king. Modern historians, it should be noted, blame both Gloucester and Winchester for the disruptions which occurred during Henry's minority. It seems clear that both lords were motivated by ambition, and so they equally sought to influence the young king. Hence, the rivalry emerged.³⁵

Ultimately, however, the clearest example of Hall's assessment of these powerful lords comes with his description of their deaths. Gloucester, apparently murdered while in prison on, according to the author, trumped-up charges, receives the following eulogy: "Thus was the noble duke, sonne, brother, and vncle to kynges, whiche he had valeauntly and pollitiquely by the space of XXV. yeres gouerned this realm . . . by a bone cast by his

enemies, choked and brought to his fatall fine, and laste ende" (p. 209). The death of Cardinal Winchester, on the other hand, comes with far less praise for this powerful lord, who was, in Hall's words, "more noble of blodd, then notable in learning, haut in stomacke . . . disdaynfull to his kyn and dreadfull to his louers, preferryng money before frendshippe, many thinges beginning, and nothing perfourmyng." The chronicler continues to criticize the cardinal, claiming that he neglected his duties to the king and to God (p. 210). Once again, Hall sees Gloucester as one who has faithfully served God and country, while Winchester was vain, scheming, ambitious and inconstant.

The other great conflict which divided the court of Henry VI was the rivalry between Richard, Duke of York, and the Duke of Somerset. The treatment of York presents something of a problem to the chroniclers, because he advanced a seemingly valid claim to the throne, and this reflects badly upon Henry VI, who generally appears in a sympathetic light. York in effect upheld the right of Richard II over his usurper, Henry IV, who was, of course, the grandfather to Henry VI. Moreover, the duke's claim to the throne came from his relation to Lionel, Duke of Clarence and third son to Edward III. The Lancastrian kings based their claim upon Henry IV's relation to John of Gaunt, Edward's fourth son. While Hall is quick to indicate York's overwhelming ambition, he nevertheless points to the agreeable nature of his claim to the throne, labelling Henry IV of Lancaster as "the first auctor of this diuision" (p. 231). Somerset, on the other hand, was a member of the queen's faction, and so he appears in this chronicle as being guilty of exacerbating the courtly strife. Furthermore, Hall

blames this duke for the loss of French territory: "he (Somerset) was promoted to so high an office . . . that by all waies and means possible, he both hindered and detracted hym (York) . . . till Paris and the floure of France were gotten by the Frenche kyng" (p. 179).

Consistancy, however, is of little importance to Hall in this work. He later accuses York of instigating the feud with Somerset to further the cause of his gaining the crown (p. 225). From this point on, the historian describes both dukes as quarrelsome and ambitious, while Henry repeatedly appears as the innocent victim of their plotting. Curiously, York's language upon bringing his claim before parliament is closely echoed by Shakespear's Henry IV upon the deposition of Richard II: York, according to Hall, sees England in the grip of a "quotidia feuer," for which, the duke claims, he is "the principall Physician" (p. 245). Yet the chronicler's treatment of York is by this point not nearly so sympathetic as Shakespeare's treatment of Henry IV, for the duke now appears to be obsessed with his ambitions. Upon his death at the battle of Wakefield, Hall asserts that the duke was too impatient to wait for the king's natural death, and so he caused his own end "by to muche hardinesse" (p. 342). The reason for the chronicler finally settling upon this interpretation of York seems to be that, while he may have had a valid claim to the throne, it was the French alone (to Edward Hall) who profitted from York's ambitions. Aiding the French indirectly, then, in the writer's mind apparantly mitigates the justice of the duke's claim.

While Hall wavers at first in his treatment of Richard, Duke of York, he presents no such ambivalence on the subject of Henry VI. Significantly, the king himself is somewhat of a minor character in this history. Hall manages to keep him free of blame by asserting that Henry placed the greatest authority in Gloucester. The cardinal and the queen, by opposing the duke, exacerbated the factions at court, and so the historian blames the clergyman and the Frenchwoman (p. 208). Later, it is the queen again who disturbs the peace, violating the truce established between Henry and York (p. 249). Notice again the inconsistency: Hall first blames the queen, then the Duke of York; what matters to the writer is that the king appears innocent. In fact, Henry only takes a truly decisive role in opposing Jack Cade's rebellion, after which he "punished the stubburne heddes, and deliuered the ignorāt & miserable people, to the greate reioycying of all his subiectes" (p. 222). Here the writer shows Henry acting in the tradition of Hoccleve, Lydgate and Blacman, showing mercy to his wayward subjects. Later, as the king neared his death, Hall describes his prophetic words about his nephew, Henry Tudor: "So this holy man (the king) shewed before, the chaunce that should happen, that this erle Henry so ordeined by God, should in tyme to come . . . have and enioye the kyngdome . . ." (p. 287). Here, the chronicle is reminiscent of Blacman's tract, which asserted that the king had divine powers. Upon the death of Henry VI, Hall accepts the popular notion that York's third son, the new Duke of Gloucester, killed the deposed monarch in the Tower, and writes that without an enemy left, his usurpers turned their violence upon themselves (p. 303).

Raphael Holinshed, in turn, wrote his Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland in the late sixteenth century, the last edition containing the history of these realms through 1586. His section on Henry VI, simply titled "Henrie the sixt; sonne and heire to Henrie the fift," so closely follows Hall that many passages are lifted verbatim from The Vnion of the two Noble and Illustre Famelies. Holinshed also uses some minor chroniclers and political writers, but not nearly to the same extent as he relies upon Hall. For example, on the subject of the French wars, Holinshed likewise devotes a disproportionate amount of his text. Here an interesting departure from Hall is that this writer is far less critical of Joan of Arc, describing her first from the French point of view: "A person (as their bookes make hir) raised vp by power diuine, onellie for succour to the French estate . . ." ³⁶ This interpretation, however, is the only significant difference between the two chroniclers on the war. Similarly, Holinshed follows Hall very closely on the feud between Gloucester and Winchester, actually quoting the earlier author upon their deaths (pp. 211-12). Again, like Hall, the later writer blames "either the disdeine amongst the cheef peeres of the realme . . . or the negligence of the king's counsell" for the loss of French territory (p. 185). Also, he does not place blame on Henry VI, but focuses rather upon the factions at court. One important difference between Holinshed and Hall, however, emerges in York's dissention. Holinshed includes a lengthy correspondence between the duke and the king, thus giving Henry a large role in attempting to placate the ambitious York. Finally, upon the death of Henry VI, Holinshed again quotes Hall directly:

Of his owne naturall inclination he abhorred all vices of the bodie as well as of the soule. His patience was such that all of the iniuries to him doone (whiche were innumerable) he neuer asked vengeance, thinking that for such aduersitie as chanced to him, his sinnes should be forgotten and forgiuen (p. 324).

From the political writings of Hoccleve and Lydgate, then, the writing on kingship in general and Henry VI in particular centered upon issues of the greatest importance to England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: issues such as a king's personal qualities, his ability to promote harmony within the state, court politics, and, of course, the element of fate. The writings of Hall and Holinshed reflect this tradition in historical literature, as well as the hagiography of John Blacman. Throughout all of these works, there is an immanent sense of doom, with constant reminders of the transitory nature of worldly status and power. Certainly, when Shakespeare began to write his first three plays, the pressures of social and religious tensions must have resounded off of this historical record with its emphasis upon the failures of kingship. To a large extent, the playwright follows in the tradition begun by the late medieval writers and continued through Holinshed's Chronicles. Nevertheless, it is important to discern the differences which Shakespeare's own specific place in history produced in his writing. The concluding chapters, then, examine the degree to which Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three, followed the literary and historical record, and the degree to which Shakespeare departed from his predecessors.

Chapter Three: Shakespeare and the Tradition of Henry VI

The tradition of literature and historical writings to which Shakespeare added his Henry VI plays, then, attempted to define kingship, in a sense analyze the ideal king, and derive standards with which to judge the monarchs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. To generalize from the writings of Hoccleve and Lydgate, there appear to be two central functions of a king, or two aspects of kingship. On the one hand, the king must protect his land, maintain its unity against civil dissent and foreign intrigue. This aspect of kingship is that of the warrior and the statesman: valorous, prudent, rational, and politically shrewd. On the other hand, the king himself must nurture prosperity, bring vitality to his land, and stand as an example of piety, virtue, and spiritual health. In this sense, the king is something of a religious figure, for it is moral strength as well as physical ability and cunning which sets the ideal king apart from the less successful princes.³⁷ To be sure, Hoccleve, Lydgate and Blacman all stress the religious and moral qualities which are central to successful kingship as they see it. Implicitly, too, the emphasis on the king's spiritual role reappears in Holinshed and Hall, for they repeatedly praise Henry's piety.

Turning to Shakespeare, it is interesting to see how the playwright follows Hall and Holinshed in addressing the peculiar problem of the weak king. To be sure, Henry VI was a failure by the standards of Hoccleve and Lydgate, having been unable to restrain his dissenting lords and maintain his throne (and,

therefore, being unable to ensure prosperity and harmony for his people). Yet the literary and historical tradition of the early writers permeates Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three. And Shakespeare, in his first three plays, follows the sixteenth century chroniclers in focusing a disproportionate amount of his history upon one of Henry's greatest failures, the French war and the loss of Normandy and Gascony. From the first scene of Part One, the importance of the warrior-king emerges. The death of Henry V produces various reactions that attest to his greatness, both as a soldier in the field and as the embodiment of his people's moral strength, piety and virtue. Gloucester declares, "He ne'er lift up his hand but conquered" (I. i. 16), while the Bishop of Winchester asserts, "He was blest of the King of kings" (I. i. 28).³⁸ Hence, as Lydgate and Hoccleve would have it, Henry V had within him both the militaristic and the religious elements, and it was in France that he proved the greatness, as Shakespeare's characters say, of his reign. As in the chronicles, the weight of the first part of Henry VI - indeed, twenty-one of twenty-seven scenes - takes place in France.

Yet Shakespeare's Henry VI is never able to produce the kind of victory his father was famous for. The playwright foreshadows this fact throughout the first act of Part One. For example, the first scene in the English camp in France ends with the death of Salisbury, a hero from the reign of Henry V. John Talbot, himself a heroic figure in the play, poignantly laments the ". . . accursed fatal hand/That hath contriv'd this woeful tragedy!" (I. iii. 76-77). From this point on, the tone of this play is markedly different from Henry V. Shakespeare portrays

the English heroes - first Salisbury, then Talbot - dying without replacement while Henry VI is powerless to stem the French tide. Yet the playwright's treatment of this king implies that he is as blameless as he is powerless. Throughout these plays, the verse repeatedly underscores the king's devotion to religion and scholarship, rather than the martial prowess of his father. Hence, when Shakespeare discusses the marriage truce between England and France, arranged by the Duke of Suffolk, Henry accepts the pact not out of a flight of fancy, but out of true love for Margaret of Anjou. Here, the playwright contrasts Henry with his successor, Edward IV, who appears in Part Three as a lecherous and impulsive man. Earlier in Part One, Shakespeare has the young king note his diversion for "wanton dalliance with a paramour" (V. i. 23).

If Henry is ingenuous in Shakespeare, as in Hall and Holinshed, then it is the French whose guile and craftiness pose the initial threat to England's peace. The playwright's treatment of the French in Part One, moreover, contrasts the spiritual and warlike aspects of kingship. Charles the Dolphin, leader of the French Forces, is apparently a capable commander in the field. Indeed, the first scene of the play includes a reference to John Talbot's defeat at the hands of the French, a crushing blow to the English characters who see this lord as nearly invincible. However, in Shakespeare it is the acquisition of "Joan de Pucelle" (Joan of Arc)³⁹ which turns the tide in favor of the French. She declares that she has been sent by God to rid France of the English, and her initial victories at first seem to confirm this notion. Shakespeare and the English warriors, however, regard her as an agent of Satan. Talbot, for example, asks rhetorically, "Heavens,

can you suffer hell so to prevail?" (Part One, I. iv. 9). Moreover, Shakespeare actually depicts Joan as an enchantress who conjures various Fiends at the end of Part One, and when they desert her the English regain the advantage in the field. The failure of Joan, in these plays, leaves Charles without a champion, and so he has to seek terms with the English. This is a notable departure from the chroniclers, who do not place so much significance upon Joan's defeat.

It seems that Charles possesses only one of the two central qualities of a great king, that of military valor, and that valor alone is not enough to defeat the saintly King Henry. But Shakespeare's Henry makes one mistake against which Hoccleve and Lydgate both warn: he accepts the false peace with France. The playwright, like Holinshed and Hall, refrains from placing blame upon the king, yet this mistake will prove to be the initial stage of Henry's downfall in these plays. Because Shakespeare emphasizes Suffolk's role in arranging the false peace with the treacherous French, the marriage truce becomes intrinsically tied to yet another evil against which both Hoccleve and Lydgate warned - that of accepting bad counsel - which in turn becomes the dominant theme of 2 Henry VI. Historically, it was Charles who arranged the peace settlement through the marriage of Henry to Margaret of Anjou, a relative of the French royal family.⁴⁰ The playwright, however, expands upon the chronicler's suggestion that Suffolk and his faction at court were responsible for the peace debacle.

Shakespeare, in the final scene of 1 Henry VI, brings this ambitious duke and Margaret of Anjou together in what becomes a powerful faction in Part Two, but dissention is a major theme in

Part One as well. Shakespeare follows the chroniclers in introducing the feud between Gloucester and Winchester early in his history, in fact the action begins at the beginning of 1 Henry VI. The playwright's portrayal of these two lords in effect embodies the two aspects of kingship, Gloucester being the warlike statesman and soldier, while Winchester is the spiritual counsellor and religious leader. The duke is literally the Protector of the realm, while the bishop sees himself as the protector of England's faith. In Shakespeare's view of the state, if these two elements are not in harmony, chaos results.

Furthermore, this play raises serious questions as to the integrity of either character, since they both appear to be ambitious and scheming. The character of Gloucester, however, is by far the less ambitious, for he is loyal to Henry throughout Parts One and Two. He is, nevertheless, determined to limit the bishop's political power. Winchester, as portrayed by Shakespeare, is simply concerned with adding to what power he already possesses. Salisbury comments in Part Two, Winchester frequently acts "More like a soldier than a man o' th' church" (I. i. 186). And it is in Part Two that Winchester, allied with Suffolk and the queen to overthrow Gloucester, actually has the duke murdered - to be sure, a departure from the chroniclers. Yet Shakespeare follows the chroniclers in his contrasting eulogies for Gloucester and Winchester. The duke's death meets with great sympathy, but even the ingenuous Henry VI can see through the churchman's character after his death: "Ah, what a sign it is of evil life," the king declares, "Where death's approach is seen so terrible" (Part Two, III. iii. 5-6).

With the introduction of Queen Margaret in Part Two, the playwright entangles the Gloucester-Winchester fight in the ambitions of Suffolk and Somerset. Suffolk and Margaret are, of course, associated with the French and the treacherous peace in the previous play, and so by allying the bishop with this faction the playwright further underscores the dangerous nature of Winchester. Significantly, this alliance does not appear in either Hall or Holinshed to any great extent. It is true that the chroniclers note Gloucester's opposition to the marriage truce, and both authors accuse Suffolk of complicity in the negotiations, but neither author indicates that the queen and Suffolk were directly involved in Gloucester's death. Moreover, Shakespeare adds to their disloyalty to England a disloyalty to both the king himself and to the marriage sacrament, implying a romantic inclination between the queen and her favorite duke. This romance does not appear in Hall or Holinshed. Shakespeare adds to this deleterious treatment of Suffolk, when the duke is murdered by those under his power who claim he was an evil and arbitrary feudal lord.

With Suffolk then out of the way, the playwright replaces him with the Duke of Somerset, who becomes the next powerful ally to the queen. As in the previous relationship, Shakespeare places considerably more emphasis on the queen's reliance upon powerful lords than either Hall or Holinshed. This new faction is all the more significant to the development of the plays in that Somerset's greatest rival is Richard, Duke of York, who will eventually challenge Henry's claim to the throne. Yet Shakespeare does not enter into the complicated political disputes between these lords,

as the chroniclers attempt to do. Rather, the playwright presents the York and Somerset factions as two parties motivated by their ambition to control the crown, York directly (by asserting his kinship to Richard II), and Somerset indirectly (through Margaret's domination of the king). Furthermore, Shakespeare connects the York-Somerset dispute with the French wars, revealing in Act IV of Part One that the petty rivalry between the two lords contributes to the death of Lord Talbot. Here, Somerset appears as the guilty party, for he refuses to send troops to York at Bordeaux, where Talbot is fighting a losing battle.

What is perhaps most interesting about all of the machinations of court politics in these plays is the rather minor role Henry VI actually plays. Only in two instances does Shakespeare have the king take an active part in domestic politics, both of which appear in the chronicles as well. First, Henry makes a vain effort to reconcile the feuding lords, Gloucester and Winchester, and while they nominally agree to a truce they nevertheless continue to plot against one another. The result of this ineffectual attempt to end the dispute is absolute failure: Gloucester is inevitably imprisoned for treason (a false accusation, the playwright makes clear), and then Winchester has him murdered. And, in a sense, their struggle becomes the struggle between Somerset and York, which proves to be the king's undoing. Again, when Shakespeare has York instigate a popular rebellion under Jack Cade (the connection here is not at all certain in the chronicles), Henry regains control of the people by promising clemency. Leniency and mercy, as in the chronicles, proves to be the trademark of Shakespeare's Henry VI. Meanwhile, the warnings of

Hoccleve and Lydgate against ambitious lords and factions at court echoes throughout these plays.

Another important consideration in the analysis of kingship implicit in the writings of Hoccleve and Lydgate is the need to maintain the succession of the monarchy. It is apparant in Shakespeare's play that Henry's son is not of the same ascetic nature as the king. Rather, the prince shows some of the vigour and enthusiasm of Henry V, and so there is at first some hope for a revival of the Lancastrian glory after Henry VI. However, it is Richard Duke of York who inevitably gets the succession for his heirs, as Henry V attempted to gain the French succession. It is early in the first play that Shakespeare's York asserts his claim to the throne through Lionel, Duke of Clarence. In reality, the ambitious duke did not advance his claim until 1461, after he had defeated the king in the first battle of St. Albans.⁴¹ Nevertheless, by placing York's claim early in the history, the playwright intimates that it is the duke and not the young prince who will succeed Henry VI. At this point, York is somewhat of a sympathetic character in the play, in that his claim to the throne appears legitimate and that Shakespeare portrays his enemies at court as evil and self-serving. Furthermore, the duke is victorious in the field, as his supporters in Part Two point out, while the playwright never has Henry participate in the defense of the realm. In the second play, however, the ambivalence disappears, and York becomes quite ambitious in his own right. Shakespeare even has the duke describe himself as "the starved snake/Who, cherished in your breasts, will sting your hearts" (III. i. 344-45). But the Duke of York in these plays apparantly has not the moral

strength to defeat Henry VI, and so he dies at the battle of Wakefield in Part Three.

Henry's religious faith, his honor and his peaceful nature certainly seem to indicate that he is in possession of the moral qualities of Hoccleve's and Lydgate's ideal king, yet he cannot maintain his throne. At the beginning of Part Three, York's faction forces Henry to turn the succession of the monarchy over to the duke, despite bitter protests from the frustrated prince. In reality, the king compromised with the Yorkists largely because the duke presented a strong claim to the throne to a parliament already insensed by Henry's capricious reign.⁴² In addition, this last play portrays York as one who vows loyalty to the king until his natural death, and then abrogates his pledge. Actually, it was Queen Margaret who led forces into the field against York, despite the agreement between the duke and the king; again, Henry was not quite the victim that Shakespeare portrays.⁴³ Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Henry VI is reminiscent of Blacman's, in that both authors attempt to reconcile the late medieval tradition of kingship to the problem of a weak king. Blacman, Hall, Holinshed and Shakespeare all portray this king as possessed of the moral virtues ascribed to a proper ruler, yet weak enough to be manipulated by evil lords who scheme for their own advancement or aid the French cause. Certainly, therefore, Shakespeare follows the literary and historical record of Henry VI. The question remains, however, as to how the playwright's own period in English history shaped his interpretation of Henry VI in a unique fashion, and that question is the subject of the final chapter.

Chapter Four: Politics and Religion in Henry VI

Returning to the political climate in which Shakespeare wrote Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three, certain observations raise important questions as to the interpretation of these plays. Certainly Elizabethan England existed in a state of religious confusion, and religious issues dominated the political scene. The close association between the Church of England and the monarchy proved to be mutually advantageous, yet both institutions rested upon somewhat shaky foundations. The church itself was something of a paradox, being Catholic in structure and Calvinist in doctrine.⁴⁴ Moreover, as Hatton's speech to parliament indicates, the Catholic threat to England appeared to be growing in strength. Not only did Hatton voice concern over Catholic nations threatening England's security, but he pointed to English Catholics who posed such threats - the infamous Cardinal Allen, in particular, who encouraged the Spanish Armada in 1588.⁴⁵ Among Burghley's concerns, too, was the threat of Puritan disloyalty, the situation being all the more explosive considering the antagonism between the extremes of Protestantism and Catholicism. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that when Shakespeare began to write these religious threats to the state were more important than the threat of questioning Tudor legitimacy.

Yet the playwright, curiously, chose to focus upon England's Catholic history. Given the political atmosphere of the time, then, the question arises as to Shakespeare's treatment of the Catholic church, as he presented it to his potential patrons in

the London theatre's audience. It seems clear from these first plays that the playwright had no great love for powerful clergymen, although it is not possible to discern his exact position on the various religious issues of the day. In the opening scene of Part One, he has the Duke of Gloucester rebuke the Bishop of Winchester in commenting on Henry V's death:

Had not churchmen pray'd
His thread of life had not so soon decay'd.
None do you like but an effeminate prince,
Whom like a schoolboy you may overawe.
(I. i. 33-6)

Certainly speeches such as this are written for their dramatic effect, but Shakespeare must have been aware of the deleterious effects to Winchester's character which stem from such a remark. Moreover, this passage captures the tone with which the playwright treats the clergy throughout the Henry VI plays.

Shakespeare's Winchester does indeed want a weak king, precisely that dilemma in which England found itself on the eve of the Wars of the Roses. The bishop does in fact manipulate the king in Part One, and it is he who causes the rift with Gloucester which proceeds into the next play. In the chronicles, the duke begins the feud by charging the bishop with corruption, and so the bishop responded with charges of his own. In Henry VI, Part One, the pattern is reversed. Shakespeare has Winchester instigate the feud by refusing the duke entry to the Tower of London to prepare for war with France. Hence the bishop is not only the instigator of the feud, but he is allied with the cause of peace, contrary to the tradition of Henry V. Also, the playwright has the bishop reveal his desires for power in soliloquy at the beginning of Part One:

. . . Long will I not be Jack out of office.
The king from Eltam I intend to send,
And sit at chiefest stern of common weal.
(I. i. 175-77)

This comment is reminiscent to Lord Burghley's attacks on the Catholic clergy in The Execution of Justice in England, which was printed in 1584. According to Burghley, the priesthood of the late sixteenth century was notorious for its attempts to undermine the monarch's authority.⁴⁶ Shakespeare's Winchester makes his desire for political power absolutely clear.

In Shakespeare, then, it is the bishop who begins the rift within the state, a rift which will eventually broaden until, in Part Three, it causes Henry's downfall. In the first play, however, the king is still in his minority, and so the conduct of his ministers directly bears upon the efficacy of his rule. Significantly, Shakespeare omits the feud between the Dukes of Gloucester and Bedford over the protectorship of the realm. The chroniclers - and modern scholars - tell of a dispute over the interpretation of Henry V's will, ending in a compromise with Gloucester receiving the Protectorship and Bedford receiving the Regency of France.⁴⁷ Rather than having the bishop drawn into this power struggle as modern historians perceive it, the playwright has him create the power struggle. Gloucester, on the other hand, remains aloof of the bishop's scheming, and it is only in Act III of Part One that he levels his charges against the "saucy priest" (III. i. 45). Indeed, the duke levels these charges in response to Winchester's refusal to allow him into the Tower. As in the chronicles, the young king prevails upon these lords to set their differences aside, but Shakespeare has the bishop mutter under his breath "So help me God, as I intend

it not!" (III. i. 141). Clearly the bishop will not give in until he is satisfied with the duke's demise.

This scene in Part One is also crucial, because it is here that Shakespeare makes the connection between Winchester and the factions which will later tear the court apart. No sooner is the dispute between Gloucester and the bishop settled than the rivalry between York and Somerset emerges. Somerset vents his anger in a brief aside as Richard Plantagenet receives the dukedom of York,⁴⁸ and Exeter utters these foreshadowing words to close the scene:

This late dissention grown betwixt the peers
Burns under feigned ashes of forged love,
And will at last break out into a flame. . .
(I. i. 189-90)

In Part Two, Somerset and his followers decide that they must ally with Winchester to overthrow Gloucester, whom they perceive as preventing their advancement. This episode is a creation of Shakespeare which does not occur in the chronicles, nor in modern historical works. The playwright nevertheless forges this allegiance, and in so doing establishes a link between the overly ambitious clergy and the foreign Queen Margaret, whose protege, after the death of Suffolk, is Somerset. Hence, in Shakespeare's history of Henry VI, Winchester, Suffolk, Somerset and Queen Margaret form a faction of ambitious and domineering courtiers who engender the wrath of Gloucester and York.

Moreover, in contrast to the bishop, Shakespeare's Henry VI is a model of religiosity. From his first appearance in Part One, he is humble, generous and conciliatory, urging peace and love between his lords. As the playwright does throughout these and

other plays, he has the king utter lines which will echo repeatedly as the action proceeds: ". . . who should study to prefer a peace/If holy churchmen take delight in broils" (III. i. 110-11). Here the king hits upon the central contrast between his character and that of the bishop. Where Winchester is proud, Henry is self-effacing; where the bishop is ambitious, the king is unconcerned with temporal power. Later, Henry marries Margaret of Anjou out of love for her and the desire for lasting peace, despite the fact that this settlement diminishes his lands. Again, during the battle of Towton, while Margaret leads the king's forces against the Yorkists, Henry sits idly meditating on the shepherd's life. The pastoral image here is appropriate, for he then comments upon the fact that he suffers for all England during this civil war: with this type of characterization, Shakespeare implies the saintly image which Blacman perceived in Henry VI. The king, like a martyr, has an individual religiosity and meekness quite apart from the secular concerns of a churchman such as Gloucester.

There are several other models of individual virtue in the Henry VI plays who likewise provide a sharp contrast to Shakespeare's portrayal of the powerful clergyman. The Earl of Salisbury makes only a brief appearance in Part One, yet his role is meaningful. The playwright shows this earl as the great war hero in France done to death by a scheming Frenchman, the Master Gunner of "Orleance," and his apprentice. The hero of this scene, Salisbury, remarks upon receiving his death blow, "O Lord, have mercy on us, wretched sinners" (I. iv. 70). This humbleness and piety in death is a strong contrast to the playwright's haughty

cardinal in Part Two, who writhes in mental and spiritual torment as his death approaches. Lord Talbot, after Salisbury is wounded, proceeds to eulogize the late character for his valor and devotion. Again, like many of the speeches in Part One, Shakespeare inserts references to the glory of Henry V and the treachery of the French. In Talbot's speech, the earl is one in spirit with the late king: bold, reliable and pious. In his dying moments, the earl, who has lost one eye, is thankful that he still has "One eye . . . to look to heaven for grace" (I. iv. 83). According to Shakespeare, then, it is the French who undermine such virtuous and pious men as Salisbury, and yet the cardinal in his treachery preaches peace with this mortal foe.

The playwright then has Talbot say that he will become Salisbury - as, in effect, Salisbury became Henry V - and continue the war against France. From this point on, Shakespeare uses Talbot as a symbol of English virtue and valor. It is he who fights Joan of Arc, the French champion, and they are the two figures on whom their respective nations place the burden of the war. When their first encounter ends indecisively, Joan remarks "Talbot, farewell, thy hour is not yet come" (Part One, I. v. 13). Here Shakespeare foreshadows Talbot's death, and he later becomes the victim of the Somerset-York feud. Moreover, the English place so much faith in Talbot's prowess, that the play makes him appear as though he were taken for a saint himself. It is not at all inappropriate to Shakespeare's treatment of this lord that his troops shout "St. George!" and "A Talbot!" simultaneously (Part One, II. 1. 37). However, as Part One indicates, even so great a man cannot be immune to the ambitions of York and Somerset.

He dies because he is stranded at the battle of Bordeaux, and the feuding dukes fail to send him reinforcements. Sir William Lucy then comments upon the evils of dissent at court:

The fraud of England, not the force of France,
Hath now entrapp'd the noble-minded Talbot.
Never to England shall he bear his life,
But dies, betray'd to Fortune by your strife.
(IV. iv. 36-39)

Talbot's son similarly shows his strength of character and self-sacrificing nature at the battle of Bordeaux. The elder Talbot urges him to flee, saying that he is too young to die. Yet the son, true to his family tradition, steadfastly refuses to leave his father in such great peril. Shakespeare's portrait of these two implies that the younger Talbot is as loyal to his father as his father is to the king: the two are betrayed by factions politics, yet they remain to die an honorable death. When both father and son die at the hands of the French, there is indeed a certain sense of futility, but Shakespeare alleviates this hopelessness by pointing to the accomplishments of these two noble lords. "Had Death been French," the father says just before he expires, "then Death had died today" (IV. vii. 28). That is, the two were successful in their mission to deplete the ranks of the French. In the very next scene, Joan of Arc is deserted by her hellish Fiends, and so the French can no longer be successful in the field.

So far this analysis has rather firmly established Shakespeare's sympathy toward individual virtues and his severe criticism of a churchman such as Winchester who uses the institution over which he has power to further his ambition. Yet Shakespeare does not, apparantly, intend this history to be an

attack upon authority, but upon the abuses of authority. Indeed, as the portraits of Salisbury and the two Talbots indicate, the playwright expresses a belief in the need for obedience and duty. As a parallel to the action which occurs on the governmental level, he further includes a scathing attack on popular uprisings in the Jack Cade sequence of Part Two. Shakespeare has York encourage Cade to rebel against the crown, and his absurd claim to the throne parodies that of the duke. Moreover, this portrait of a rebel is a general attack upon those who would set themselves up as authority figures in the place of true authority. In this sense, the attack on Cade points to Winchester and Somerset as well, for they attempt to rule the country by ruling the king. In Shakespeare's own day the threat of insurrection came primarily from radical Catholics, and the playwright's ridiculing treatment of Cade's followers is similar to Lord Burghley's treatment of Catholic rebels in The Execution of Justice in England, wherein he refers to one insurgent as "a faithless beast rather than a man."⁴⁹

It is the French threat, however, that dominates the first play and indirectly leads to the outcome of Part Three. Here, the playwright is emphatic in his criticism of the enemy leaders. Charles, who claims to be the heir apparent to the French crown - whom the English claim is usurping their right to that crown through the victories of Henry V - appears as a cunning, evil character in Part One. Significantly, he is something of a coward as well. Early in the play, Joan of Arc defeats the Dolphin in single combat, and while she will prove to be an overwhelming force in battle, the audience has seen nothing of her

so far. Shakespeare significantly chooses Charles to be the first man overcome by Joan. Furthermore, the Dolphin not only enlists her in his camp, but openly expresses his sexual desires for her. Throughout this play, the playwright has Charles follow her in the wake of her victories, hoping that she will favor his affection, and so the French leader looks rather ridiculous in contrast to his English counterparts. And the Dolphin's love for Joan is Shakespeare's innovation, for it does not occur in either Hall or Holinshed.

Moreover, while Talbot and Salisbury die valiantly in the execution of the war, the French leader cannot even accept responsibility for his own defeats. Shakespeare repeatedly has him place the blame on his subordinates when his forces lose in battle. He thus blames the Duke of Alanson for the loss of Orleans early in Act II, and Joan of Arc for the failure to retake Rouen in Act III. In this latter scene the playwright portrays him inconstant in love as well as irresponsible, and he no longer desires her aid. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Dolphin repeatedly relies upon his subordinates to take on the difficult tasks of this war. It is Joan who convinces the Duke of Burgundy to betray the English and return to the French camp, it is she who faces Talbot in battle, and it is she who will ultimately die at the hands of the English. Later, it is Prince Reignier and Suffolk who arrange the marriage truce, and of course it is Charles who profits. The chroniclers, it should be noted, do criticize Charles, but not nearly to the same extent. Even Hall, who wrote while the French threat was still foremost in England's concerns, presented a more objective view of the French leader. To

Shakespeare, Charles is self-serving, ignoble and venomous.

In addition, the playwright ridicules several of the other characters on the French side as well. The Duke of Burgundy, for example, is wavering and inconstant in his alliances. Reignier's poverty and mercenary interest in the truce hardly become his stature in the French court. Yet Shakespeare concentrates his invective against the French to the greatest extent in his treatment of Joan. She is, from her first appearance in Part One, unlettered, discourteous and overbearing. While she claims to be God's chosen heroine for France, she is nevertheless diametrically opposed to the peaceful religiosity of Henry throughout the next two plays. Furthermore, the playwright emphasizes her hypocrisy from her first appearance on stage. "I must not yield to the rights of love," she says, "For my profession's sacred from above" (I. ii. 113-14); but then she proceeds to entice the Dolphin into accepting her aid. Shakespeare's attack on Joan, however, becomes its most extreme in her defeat. After the devils desert her in Act V of Part One, she goes so far as to offer them her body to regain their favor. When, finally, she faces the stake upon being captured by the English, the playwright has her claim to be pregnant; but the virtuous English do not believe her, and so she dies at the stake.

The French, then, appear in these plays as cowardly, guileful, vulgar and treacherous. In the end, Shakespeare's French are even associated with Satan through Joan of Arc. In Shakespeare's time, Burghley wrote the same of all Catholic nations, asserting that their aim is to foment insurrection within Protestant nations such as England.⁵⁰ The Henry VI plays, similarly, have a "fifth

column" of French influence in the form of the Queen Margaret-Suffolk-Somerset faction. Shakespeare alters the chroniclers' tale when he has Suffolk arrange the marriage truce, and so he is associated with the French. Winchester, too, aids the French, although indirectly, by urging a peace settlement. Once the French war is over, the fifth column then continues to destroy the peace of the realm from within. In addition, both York and Cade sieze upon the unprofitable marriage in their condemnation of Henry. The chroniclers likewise note the disunity caused by the loss of French territory, but their treatment of York includes extended discussions of domestic problems as well. In Shakespeare, it is the marriage truce which leads to Henry's decline, because, on the one hand, it creates the powerful queen's faction, and, on the other hand, engenders York's alliance to the populace.

Hence, Shakespeare like Lord Burghley attacks the powerful Catholic clergy and the Catholic states on the continent as dangerous to England's national security. The Catholic heroes of the Henry VI plays - Henry himself, Gloucester, Salisbury, the two Talbots - are men of individual virtue. Their piety, especially in the case of the king, comes through strongly in these plays, but not in the context of organized religion. Yet the individualism of these characters cannot be taken as an attack on authority outright, because the playwright repeatedly stresses the sense of duty and sacrifice within these heroes. Above all, Shakespeare's treatment of the French seems to reflect rather clearly the anti-Catholic xenophobia which contemporary politicians such as Hatton and Burghley expressed. Shakespeare's Cardinal Winchester, Charles, Joan of Arc, Suffolk and Queen Margarec, then, no doubt represent

the notions of Catholics which permeated the political rhetoric of his day. Hence, while he followed to some extent the literary and historical record of his subject, Shakespeare's Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three nevertheless reflect an awareness of current religious and political issues.

Conclusion

It is, perhaps, impossible to say what motivated Shakespeare to write the Henry VI plays, despite the most thorough research. Nevertheless, it does seem clear that these three plays contain within them reflections of contemporary religious politics, echoes of popular religious sentiment, and a common fear of the Catholic threat. These issues were, after all, the immediate questions facing Elizabethan politics: the fear of Catholic insurrection, disobedience to the Church of England, foreign invasion and so on. If the Tudor dynasty stood upon shaky ground during the reign of Elizabeth I, it was most likely because of the religious divisions in England, and the general antagonisms between the Catholic and Protestant states of Europe. Therefore, it is somewhat less likely that Shakespeare's primary interest in defending the regime was the legitimacy of the line itself, then on its fifth monarch, rather than these religious and political issues. That is not to say that the Tudor Myth was entirely absent from Shakespeare's writing, but it is likely that this theme was secondary to the overall condemnation of the Catholic clergy, ambitious and dissenting lords, and the Catholic princes of Europe.

Notes

- ¹From "Chronology and Sources," The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co. (Boston, 1974), p. 48. Early editions of Parts One and Two were titled The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster, and The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York. The text of these versions is virtually the same as the plays as they exist today.
- ²Hatton, as quoted in J. E. Neale, Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments 1584-1601, W. W. Norton and Co. (New York, 1966), p. 197.
- ³Ibid, p. 196.
- ⁴Ibid, p. 198.
- ⁵Conrad Russell, "Arguments for Religious Unity in England, 1530-1650," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, vol. XVIII (October, 1967), p. 210.
- ⁶Neale, op. cit., p. 222.
- ⁷Ibid, p. 222 ff.
- ⁸Ibid, p. 228.
- ⁹Ibid, p. 267 ff.
- ¹⁰Morice, as quoted in Neale, p. 269.
- ¹¹Neale, p. 272 ff.
- ¹²Ibid, p. 274 ff.
- ¹³Ibid, p. 281 ff.

- ¹⁴ Ibid, p. 285 ff.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, p. 287.
- ¹⁶ Russell, op. cit., p. 219.
- ¹⁷ Joel Hurstfield, Elizabeth I and the Unity of England, Harper and Row (New York, 1960), p. 162.
- ¹⁸ Joel Hurstfield, "Church and State, 1558-1612: The Task of the Cecils," Studies in Church History, vol. II, p. 130.
- ¹⁹ Hurstfield, Elizabeth I, p. 508 ff.
- ²⁰ Register of the Company of Stationers of London, Vol. II, 5 January 1591. (Entries listed by date; pages not numbered.)
- ²¹ Ibid, on 12 March 1594, 19 June 1594, and 11 October 1594, respectively.
- ²² G. Blakemore Evans, op. cit., p. 48.
- ²³ Greene's Groats-worth of Wit, as quoted in David Riggs, Shakespeare's Heroical Histories, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, MA, 1971), p. 1.
- ²⁴ Riggs, op. cit., p. 17.
- ²⁵ Conyers Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth, Jonathan Cape (London, 1965), p. 502: it is possible that Shakespeare wrote A Midsummer Night's Dream for the Cecils.
- ²⁶ The Regiment of Princes, printed in the Early English Text Society, Vol. 72-73: Hoccleve's Works, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, Keegan Paul Trench Trübner and Co. (London, 1897). pp. 79-197. All references noted in parentheses.

- ²⁷Introductory note to John Lydgate, Fall of Princes, ed. by Dr. Henry Bergen, published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press (London, 1924), p. ix.
- ²⁸To be sure, the change in tone may well suit literary as well as instructional purposes. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the pessimistic strain in The Fall of Princes, a tone which Shakespeare later adopts in plays such as Titus Andronicus, Coriolanus, and King Lear.
- ²⁹From The Fall of Princes, cited above. All further references noted in parentheses.
- ³⁰Bertram P. Wolffe, Henry VI, Eyre Methuen Ltd. (London, 1981), p. 355.
- ³¹Henry the Sixth, A Reprint of John Blacman's Memoir, translated by M. R. James, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1919), p. 24. All further references noted in parentheses.
- ³²Wolffe, op. cit., p. 352.
- ³³Edward Hall, Chronicle; Containing the History of England, (London, 1809), p. 115. All further references noted in parentheses. Bedford was made Regent of France by virtue of the fact that Henry V had extracted from the French a treaty which secured the French throne for his heirs.
- ³⁴It must also be noted here that, because Henry VIII was himself involved in futile wars with France at the time Hall was writing, any deleterious commentary on the French would gain the writer the king's favor. This situation no doubt influenced Hall in his description of the French.
- ³⁵See, for example, Wolffe, op. cit., pp. 30ff, 65ff. This historian sees these early conflicts, along with the Bedford-Gloucester feud, as foreshadowing the factions which would divide the court during Henry's majority.

- ³⁶Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, (London, 1808), p. 163. All further references noted in parentheses. If Holinshed is in anyway less critical of the French than Hall is, it is most likely due to the fact that, by the 1580's and 90's, the French were no longer England's greatest adversary. In this period, Spain posed the greater threat to England's security.
- ³⁷As an interesting parallel, Sir James Frazer develops this same dual role in his monumental anthropological study, The Golden Bough. The title comes from the King of the Wood Myth, in which a king retains his crown only so long as he can defend the golden branch growing upon a tree. His successor must fight him, but first he must procure the golden bough. Hence the bough is a symbol of fertility, vitality, prosperity, and so on. Its being gold implies that it symbolizes purity as well.
- ³⁸All references to the text of Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three are from The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co. (Boston, 1974), pp. 596-704.
- ³⁹References to French names and places are frequently rather erroneous in these plays. For example, Orleans is "Orleance" in Shakespeare. He also refers to Joan of Arc as "Joan of Aire".
- ⁴⁰Wolffe, op. cit., p. 170.
- ⁴¹Ibid, p. 323.
- ⁴²Ibid, p. 325.
- ⁴³Ibid, p. 329.
- ⁴⁴Hurstfield, "Church and State," p. 121.

⁴⁵Neale, op. cit., p. 198.

⁴⁶William Cecil, Lord Burghley, The Execution of Justice in England, ed. by Robert M. Kingdon, Cornell University Press (Ithaca, NY, 1965) pp. 6-7ff.

⁴⁷Wolffe, op. cit., p. 31.

⁴⁸Richard Plantagenet's father lost the dukedom because he supported the Mortineers in their uprisings against the earlier Lancastrian kings. Here, Henry VI naively returns the dukedom to the family that will destroy him.

⁴⁹Cecil, op. cit., p. 4.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 7.

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